

**Standard 7-7** The student will demonstrate an understanding of the significant political, economic, geographic, scientific, technological, and cultural changes and advancements that took place throughout the world from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day.

**7-7.1** Illustrate on a time line the events that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union and other communist governments in Europe, including economic failures and the emergence of new leaders. (H, E, P)

**Taxonomy Level:** A 1 Remember/Factual Knowledge

**Previous/future knowledge:**

This is the first time students have been taught about the events that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union and other communist governments in Europe, including economic failures and the emergence of new leaders.

In 5<sup>th</sup> grade, students compared the position of the United States on the world stage following World War I, World War II, and the collapse of the communist states.

In Global Studies, students will summarize the worldwide effects of the Cold War, including the competition for power between the United States and the Soviet Union, the changing relationships between the Soviet Union and China, the response by popular culture, and the collapse of the communist states (GS-6.2).

**It is essential for students to know:**

Erected in 1961, the Berlin Wall became the symbol of a division between communism and capitalism. As the dividing line between East Berlin and West Berlin, the collapse of the Wall in November 1989 reflected the changes happening throughout the Communist East in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These changes were caused, to a great degree, by the near economic collapse of the Soviet economy after years of trying to support the cold war arms race.

The Soviet Union was the primary Communist nation throughout the Cold War (7-6.2). Following Gorbachev's election as leader the USSR in 1982, the Soviet Union moved away from its totalitarian style. Gorbachev encouraged economic and social reforms, including *glasnost* (a policy of openness) and *perestroika* (economic restructuring) that allowed for dissention, more public participation, and greater individual freedom. In 1987, Gorbachev introduced a policy called *democratization*, which was the process of creating a government elected by the people. While granting greater freedom to those within Soviet borders, various nationalist groups began calling for freedom, leading to rising ethnic tensions. In March 1990, Lithuania declared independence from the Soviet Union. Gorbachev ordered an economic blockade of the country in an attempt to force it to rejoin the USSR, but he eventually had to use force in early 1991 when the blockade proved ineffective.

In June 1991, frustrated by the economic difficulties and Lithuanian issues, the people of the USSR turned to Boris Yeltsin as the first directly elected president of the Russian Federation (Gorbachev remained president of the Soviet Union at this time). In August 1991, conservative communists unsuccessfully attempted to overthrow Gorbachev's government and remove him from power. However, following this unsuccessful coup, the Soviet party lost power. By December 1991, all fifteen Soviet republics had declared independence. These fifteen agreed to form the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a loose federation of former Soviet states. The formation of the CIS was the official end of the Soviet Union, and Gorbachev officially resigned as president of the Soviet Union on December 25, 1991.

As president, Yeltsin adopted a plan known as “shock therapy” which was an abrupt shift to free-market economics. By 1993, the plan led to outrageous inflation rates and hardship. Yeltsin faced further difficulties as Chechnya fought to gain independence from Russia, having declared independence in 1991. A cease-fire was declared in 1996, but war continued even as Vladimir Putin took over as Russian president in 1999.

In Central and Eastern Europe, communist governments also fell out of power in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Students should have a general knowledge why this happened. It is less important that they know all the details about each country, but rather a comparison would be helpful of when and how communism was overturned in each area.

In Poland, the labor union Solidarity opposed communist rule and demanded government recognition of their group. Led by Lech Walesa, Solidarity gained popularity as the government continued to struggle with economic issues. When free elections were held in April 1989, Lech Walesa was elected president. As president, Walesa followed a similar path as Yeltsin of “shock therapy”, bringing free-market economics to Poland. Although the economy improved, the people continued to be discontented and chose a former communist as their next president in 1995. Kwasniewski led Poland to become a member of NATO in 1999 and continued the process toward democracy and free-market economics.

In Hungary, the communist party was overthrown in October 1989. By 1994, however, a group of former communists regained control of Hungary's parliament as a socialist party group. At this point, the socialist party and democratic party formed a coalition to rule. In 1999, Hungary joined NATO. In the early 2000s, Hungary suffered economic hardships but remained a market economy.

**It is not essential for students to know:**

It is not essential for students to know all of the leaders of the USSR between Stalin and Gorbachev. They do not need to know the names of all Russian republics. The study of Central and Eastern Europe should be focused on large points of comparison, e.g., the importance of 1989, how are areas similar and different since 1989, rather than detailed discussions of people and events.

**Assessment guidelines:**

The objective of this indicator is to **illustrate** on a time line the events that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union and other communist governments in Europe; therefore, assessments should require students to **list** the causes of the collapse, place them in chronological order and **create** a time line of parallel developments in former Soviet controlled states.